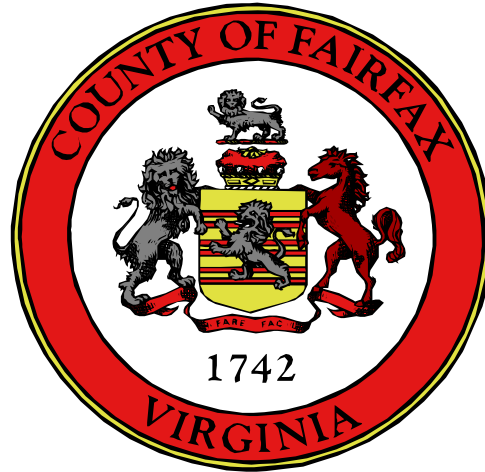


INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

REVIEW OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG SERVICES DIVISION



**FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA
INTERNAL AUDIT OFFICE
M E M O R A N D U M**

TO: Robert J. O'Neill, Jr.
County Executive

DATE: January 8, 1999

FROM: Ronald A. Coen, Director
Internal Audit Office

SUBJECT: Report on the *“Review of Alcohol and Drug Services Division”*

This is a report on the *“Review of Alcohol and Drug Services Division”*. It was performed at your request.

The findings and recommendations of this audit were discussed with the Community Services Board staff. We have reached agreement on all of the recommendations and I will follow up periodically until implementation is complete. Their responses are incorporated into the report. A copy of the report has also been provided to Verdiana Haywood. Upon receipt of your approval, I will provide a copy to Jim Thur for distribution to the FFCCSB and I will provide a copy to our Board Audit Committee.

RAC:df

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Introduction

Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) functions as a segment of the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board to reduce alcohol and other drug problems among the residents and employees of Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church. To accomplish this goal, the staff reaches out to groups and individuals at high risk of developing such problems and extends treatment services to alcohol and drug dependent persons and their families in Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church. In fiscal year 1997, the agency served 5,607 clients at a cost of \$15,734,000. The agency provides four major areas of service to residents which are Community Services, Adult Services, Residential Services and Youth Services.

The clients receive these services from ADS and contract agencies through the various substance abuse programs, staffed by Substance Abuse Counselors who administer treatment, counseling, education, and referrals for the clients. Depending upon education, experience, and training, the duties and responsibilities of these counselors range from entry level (S18) to management and administrative functions (S26).

In the past several months, some former and current employees raised certain personnel issues in the agency to the attention of the Board of Supervisors and the County Executive's Office that necessitated inquiry and suggestions as to resolution.

Purpose and Scope

In August 1998, the County Executive directed the Internal Audit Office to review personnel administration in Alcohol and Drug Services. This review included the following issues:

- Procedures used to fill new and vacant positions,
- Proper application of personnel performance appraisals,
- Employee conduct and disciplinary actions,
- Administration of overtime and compensatory time,
- Compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act,
- Conflict of interest issues relating to personnel and contracting,

Our review focused primarily on 1997 and 1998. We reviewed personnel documentation, interviewed ADS employees, surveyed past and current employees, and analyzed statistical data. We also worked closely with the Department of Human Resources to assist us in the evaluation and interpretation of information obtained.

Executive Summary

A mixture of former and current ADS employees accused the agency of improper and unfair practices in the following personnel administrative areas:

- filling vacant positions,
- employee performance evaluations,
- conduct and disciplinary actions,
- administration of overtime/compensatory time,
- Fair Labor Standards Act,
- conflict of interest relating to personnel and contracting.

The County Executive directed our office to review these areas. We concluded that:

- For all of the areas reviewed ADS processes complied with the Fairfax County Personnel Regulations.
- Some changes are needed in the ADS personnel administrative processes to insure that they are applied in a fair and objective manner. Recommendations are summarized below with details in the body of the report.
- In our judgement, ADS has a growing morale problem with a significant minority of its employees.

Recommendations

Filling of Vacant Positions

- ADS should check state and national credentialing bodies to authenticate a candidate's credentials and reveal any disciplinary actions or suspensions prior to extending a job offer. (Page 5)
- Job announcements and any internal memoranda should clearly communicate any preferred/specific qualifications and the fact that an automated resume screening process is used. (Page 6)
- The CSB needs to insure that selection criteria contained in the Personnel Requisition and the job announcements relate directly to the key words and phrases that are used by ADS to screen the eligibility lists to certify applicants. (Page 6)
- When Resumix is used as the process to certify applicants from the eligibility list, adding individuals to the certification lists outside of this defined selection process should require review and approval of DHR Employment Division. (Page 7)
- Selection panels should include brief, clear, specific documentation of the basis for the selection or non-selection of certified applicants for interviews when all applicants are not interviewed. (Page 7)

- Any changes to rating sheets should be accomplished by drawing a line through the original score and transcribing the new score next to the old score. The rater should include a notation of the reason for the change on the rating sheet. (Page 7)
- For filling SAC III positions and above interview panels should include an independent person from outside of the ADS agency. (Page 8)
- The basis for selection and non-selection should always be specifically and clearly spelled out in a narrative summary supported by the individual rating sheets. All panel members should initial or sign the summary. (Page 8)
- Personnel Action Requests forms for a lateral transfer should include a brief description of the reasons for the transfer. (Page 9)
- Supervisors and employees should be encouraged to use the new Alternative Dispute Resolution program for disagreements about lateral transfers. (Page 9)
- ADS lateral transfer procedures should be revised to include the employee's perspective. (Page 9)

Employee Performance Evaluations

- Publicize to all agency staff the entire employee evaluation process, from discussing the standards of performance to knowing how to address dissatisfaction with the final rating. (Page 11)
- Train all new supervisors and any current supervisors who have not been through the Department of Human Resources' course designed to assist supervisors in improving employee performance. (Page 11)
- We recommend that ADS educate and encourage supervisors and employees to use this new ADR process. (Page 12)
- ADS management should continue to monitor past due merits and follow-up with the appropriate supervisor and manager. (Page 12)
- After identifying a core of essential standards of performance, allow a supervisor and employee to **jointly create** other informal job expectations, within the context of approved job standards, that are specific to the job and relevant to the mission of the agency. (Page 13)
- Provide feedback during the evaluation cycle- both positive and negative, written and oral. (Page 13)
- Consider a non-binding, midyear rating, when there is a performance issue, to let the employee know how the process is going and what the rating would be if given then. (Page 13)

- The Department of Human Resources should conduct completely anonymous exit interviews when ADS employees leave. (Page 14)
- Invite the periodic review by each employee of their work site file and the central personnel file. (Page 14)
- Ensure that each employee is informed about the data that is included in the evaluation rating. (Page 14)
- Provide more frequent positive feedback when it is deserved. (Page 14)
- Invite employee participation in gathering information about performance. (Page 15)
- Once a year encourage an informal process where employees are invited to submit anonymous evaluations of their supervisors with any recommendations for changes to the way things are done. (Page 15)
- There should be a strong consideration of how supervisors and employees interact as a function, of how counselors and clients interact. (Page 15)
- There needs to be more of a support structure for employee burnout. (Page 15)
- The whole agency needs to meet more frequently and hear that they are doing a great job for their clients, the client families, and the whole of Fairfax County. (Page 16)
- There should be some sort of ongoing quality control in place for the ADS employee evaluation process and hiring process. (Page 16)

Overtime/Compensatory Time

- If employees are required to work extra hours to complete paper work then they must be allowed to report the hours as overtime on their time sheets. If working extra hours to complete the paper work is a problem then it should be handled as either a workload issue or an employee performance issue. (Page 19)
- If any employee was working out of the office on a previous day, they should make a notation to that effect in the sign in/out log when they first return to the office the next day. (Page 20)

Conflict of Interest

- We agree with the proposed revisions to CSB Policy 3020, Outside Employment and Conflict of Interest. With close monitoring by CSB, the proposed changes should minimize the risk of conflict of interest. (Page 21)

Observations and Recommendations

Procedures for Filling New and Vacant Positions

As part of our review of personnel administration in ADS, we reviewed the process and procedures used to fill new and vacant positions. This includes new hires, promotions, and lateral transfers. Several former and current employees alleged that new hires and promotions for SAC II, III, and IV's in ADS are often pre-selected. Several employees also alleged that lateral transfers are used to punish or retaliate against employees by transferring them to undesirable job locations. The purpose of this part of our review was to determine:

- Do the ADS hiring procedures comply with Fairfax County Personnel Regulations?
- Is the selection process fair and objective?
- Are lateral transfers used to punish or retaliate against employees?

There were 226 personnel actions in ADS during the period of 1997 and 1998 through 8/27/98. These actions included:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----|
| • Initial Appointments | 62 |
| • Reemployment | 8 |
| • Promotions | 32 |
| • Demotions | 4 |
| • Lateral Transfers | 120 |

We selected a representative sample of 16 positions from those personnel actions. Our sample included 6 SAC II positions, 7 SAC III positions, and 3 SAC IV positions which were filled through a combination of promotions and new hires. We reviewed the documentation for each of the personnel actions. It was not within our scope to determine if the most qualified person was selected since this is a judgement call based to a large extent on the interviews.

1. Except for some minor omissions, the hiring process and procedures in ADS comply with the requirements of the Fairfax County Personnel Regulations in the 16 sample personnel actions.

The panel selection documentation was missing for one position and the certification list was not signed on another. Some of the interview panel raters were not identified in three instances. In eight cases the Personnel Requisitions did not include the preferred qualifications, however the qualifications were included in the job announcements. There was no indication of confirmation of licensed credentials.

Recommendation

ADS should check state and national credentialing bodies to authenticate a candidate's credentials and reveal any disciplinary actions or suspensions prior to extending a job offer.

Agency Response

The CSB implemented this recommendation starting in November 1998.

2. Although, the allegations of unfair pre-selection of applicants for appointment could not be substantiated or refuted from this review some parts of the process may be perceived as unfair.

Several former and current employees alleged that ADS management pre-selects individuals for SAC positions and circumvents the competitive appointment process. Specific allegations include:

- manipulating the certification list through Resumix,
- adding people to the certification list outside of the normal process,
- appointment of unqualified individuals,
- not informing ADS staff of vacant positions,
- providing applicants with interview questions and answers,
- stacking the interview panels with individuals who will support the pre-selection, and
- coercing panel members to change their interview ratings.

The following are our observations and recommendations:

(A) The Resumix system is a two-edge sword. It clearly facilitates the screening and certification of large numbers of resumes. There are also certain inherent weaknesses involving the selection and use of the key words and phrases. SAC I, II, and III's are hired from eligibility lists that are maintained by the Department of Human Resources (DHR). A person applies for a SAC position and if DHR determines that they meet the minimum qualifications they are placed on the "eligibility list". The eligibility lists are open continuously. However, applicants are responsible for reactivating their name on the eligible list every three months. The Resumix system expedites the certification process through automated computer screening of the resumes for those persons on the eligibility list as opposed to a manual review performed by staff.

Job specific qualifications are established by ADS for each individual position to be filled. The Resumix system uses key words and phrases to search the eligibility list for individuals with those qualifications for inclusion on the certification list. The selection of key words and phrases is determined by ADS. The actual Resumix search is performed by the Office of Administration for Human Services. One of the complaints about the process is that it tends to result in the selection of the same names over and over, even though those individuals have been eliminated as undesirable through previous interviews. Also, through the selection and use of key words, it is possible to influence the selection of certain individuals as certified or not certified. Resumix also cannot distinguish between differing levels of a particular qualification. These are inherent weaknesses of Resumix.

Recommendation

Job announcements and any internal memoranda should clearly communicate any preferred/specific qualifications and the fact that an automated resume screening process is used. The CSB needs to insure that selection criteria contained in the Personnel Requisition and the job announcements relate directly to the key words and phrases that are used by ADS to screen the eligibility lists to certify applicants.

Agency Response

The CSB will stipulate preferred/specific qualifications, when appropriate, both in job announcements and memos soliciting internal transfers. The CSB will verify that key words and phrases used to screen eligibility list applicants in the RESUMIX system will relate to the Selection Criteria/Preferred Qualifications information provided on the Personnel Requisition.

(B) Adding names to the certification list that were not selected by Resumix may be unfair to the other individuals on the eligibility list that were not selected by Resumix. We were also told that, on occasion, ADS managers add names to the certification list that were not certified by the Resumix process. It is not unusual for an agency to request DHR to certify a qualified applicant. However, in this situation the agency itself is adding the person outside of the defined process. In other organizations that use Resumix a great deal of importance is placed on the consistent application of the defined process to all applicants. Applicants should only be added to the certification list with the specific review and approval of DHR Employment Division.

Recommendation

When Resumix is used as the process to certify applicants from the eligibility list, adding individuals to the certification list outside of the defined Resumix process should require review and approval of DHR Employment Division.

Agency Response

The Employment Division has agreed to review any applicants added to the certification list for agreement with the selection criteria used by Resumix to certify applicants.

(C) There was no documentation of the basis for the selection or non-selection of individuals for interviews from the certification list. Not all applicants on the certification list must be interviewed. There can be valid reasons for not interviewing all applicants that are certified. Applicants have different degrees of knowledge, skills, and abilities. In fairness to the applicants and to protect the selection panel against charges of unfair selection, those reasons need to be clearly documented when all certified applicants are not interviewed.

Recommendation

We recommend that the selection panel include brief, clear, specific documentation of the basis for the selection and non-selection of certified applicants for interviews when all certified applicants are not interviewed.

Agency Response

In January 1999, the CSB will direct interview panels in all programs to provide such documentation for certified applicants.

(D) We saw some interview rating sheets that had been changed or altered. Some current and former employees, who participated on interview panels, complained that they had been coerced to change their interview rating sheets to support an applicant that was not their first choice. There are valid reasons for changing interview rating sheets from time to time. These reasons should be briefly documented when scores are changed.

Recommendation

Interviewers should document the basis for changing scores or rating sheets. We recommend that any changes to rating sheets be accomplished by drawing a line through the original score and transcribing the new score next to the old score. The rater should include a notation of the reason for the change on the rating sheet.

Agency Response

Effective December 6, 1998, CSB staff has been directed to comply with this recommendation.

(E) There is no way to determine if interview panels are selected in a manner to support the “pre-selection” of a particular person. All of the applicants hired in our test sample appeared to be qualified for the positions they were hired to fill. However, the basis for selection was sometimes not well documented. There are few openings for advancement compared to the number of employees eligible to advance in ADS. Obviously, there will be a significant number of disappointed employees whenever a promotional opportunity does take place since only one person can get the position. Sometimes the reasons for selecting an applicant were brief and not very specific. Reasons given for not selecting remaining applicants were repetitive. In other instances the rating sheets and documentation were illegible. It is extremely important in this environment that the process is not only fair but that it is perceived by the majority of employees as being fair and objective. Unsuccessful applicants are entitled to know the basis for the selection of the appointed individual and the evaluation documentation should be available for their review.

Recommendation

For filling SAC IIIs and above, we recommend that interview panels consist of at least three persons and that one interviewer should be an independent person from outside of the ADS agency. A way to do this so that it does not impose an undue burden on any one person is to establish a large pool of volunteers from both within and without of the County. It would be especially helpful to use community volunteers with some expertise in the treatment programs. These should be individuals with no close ties to ADS managers so that they will be perceived by all as objective.

Agency Response

In order to bring more objectivity to the selection process, the CSB agrees that for interview panels for SAC III and MH III positions and above, starting in January 1999, we will include persons independent of the specific program filling a vacant position, when possible and appropriate.

Recommendation

The basis for selection and non-selection should always be specifically and clearly spelled out in a narrative summary supported by the individual rating sheets. All panel members should initial or sign the summary.

Agency Response

This recommendation raised procedural questions for CSB staff. In order to comply with this recommendation, the CSB has requested a special training by DHR for CSB managers which has been scheduled for January 1999.

3. There is the perception that lateral transfers are used by ADS management to punish or retaliate against employees. Internal Audit could not substantiate or refute the validity of the perception.

Lateral transfers comprised 53% of all personnel actions by ADS for the years 1997 and 1998. Management has complete discretion in making lateral transfers. The Fairfax County Personnel Regulations, Chapter 8, states that the appointing authority may transfer an employee to a different position in the same class and has sole discretion to initiate such action. All transfers should only be based upon the needs of the agency and employees to accomplish its objectives and goals in serving the citizens of the County. The appointing authority is only required to complete a Personnel Action Request form with no requirement to document the justification for a lateral transfer.

In June of 1998, ADS adopted a formal lateral transfer policy. However, that policy does not address the employee's perspective. While a program's needs are paramount, other considerations in lateral transfers could include areas such as the employee's seniority, job performance, preferred hours of work, commute from home, expressed desire to work with a certain client population and/or personal needs such as school and child care needs. The employee has no available recourse to appeal or contest such actions should they feel the transfer is unfair and is retaliation or punishment.

Recommendation

As a measure to validate the justification of lateral transfers commensurate with the service goals of the agency, Personnel Action Request form should include a brief description of the reason for the transfer. We also recommend voluntary mediation of this issue through the newly created Alternative Dispute Resolution Program. ADS management should encourage both employees and supervisors to use this option. ADS procedures should be revised to include the employee's perspective.

Agency Response

As of January 1999, when the CSB transfers an employee from one positions to another in a lateral transfer, that results in the person being transferred to a new location, the reason for the transfer will be described.

On December 14, 1998, a memo was sent to all staff encouraging participation in the new Alternative Dispute Resolution program.

In January 1999, the CSB will revise its procedures to include the employee's perspective, such as preferred hours of work, commute from home, child care needs, etc. when determining lateral transfers.

Personnel Performance Evaluation Process

As part of our review of personnel administration in ADS, we reviewed the Personnel Performance Evaluation Process. ADS employees alleged that supervisors use employee performance evaluations to punish or retaliate against employees. Some employees perceive that poor performance evaluations frequently are given as a way to retaliate or punish them for something they said or did which had no relationship to their actual job performance. The purpose of this part of our review was to determine if the employee evaluation process in ADS:

- complies with the Fairfax County Personnel Regulations, and
- is conducted in a timely, fair, and helpful manner to both the employees and management in ADS.

We selected a representative sample of 16 ADS employees and reviewed the evaluation process for compliance with Fairfax County Personnel Regulations. We also individually interviewed each of those employees to determine how the process was applied to them. In addition, we sent surveys to 98 employees that had left the agency in the last three years to determine how the process was applied to them. We received 37 responses from former employees. These interviews and surveys were not and were never intended to be scientific processes. Our observations and recommendations are listed below:

1. The Personnel Performance Evaluation Process in ADS generally complies with the requirements in the Fairfax County Personnel Regulations.

The requirements in the Personnel Regulations are intended to ensure to the extent possible, that each employee is fully informed of job expectations, is motivated to perform at the highest level possible, and to assist them in performance improvement. From our test sample of 16 current employees and from our survey of former employees we found that supervisors used the prescribed form, and a supervisor at least one level higher than the person preparing the rating reviewed and signed the evaluation. The evaluations were shown to and discussed with the employee and covered the period that the employee worked for the supervisor. With only a few exceptions the sixteen evaluations were timely. Negative evaluations included advance notification of the deficiencies and identified needed improvements.

2. The Personnel Performance Evaluation Process in ADS is generally conducted in a timely, fair, and helpful manner except as noted in some of the comments below. There is a strong perception by some employees that the evaluation process is frequently applied in an unfair manner on an individual basis.

The purpose of the Personnel Performance Evaluation Process is to motivate employees to perform their jobs at the highest level possible and to assist each employee in improving their job performance. A fair and helpful employee evaluation process includes certain elements:

- The employees should understand and know the evaluation process.
- The evaluations should be timely.
- Each employee should be aware of the performance standards or job expectations for his or her position.
- Although formal evaluations are done annually, each employee should receive ongoing interim feedback about their performance from their supervisor.

- Actual evaluations should be based on the existing performance standards and expectations. An employee should never be surprised by their evaluation.
- Evaluations should be conducted with an attitude of coaching or counseling the employee.
- Finally, in those situations where an employee believes their evaluation is unfair or inappropriate, they should know what the appeal process is and they should feel comfortable using it.

We designed our employee interview questions and parts of our survey of former employees to assess the extent that these elements exist in the ADS employee evaluation process. Mr. William Pugh, Director of Employee Relations, Fairfax County Public Schools, and Ms Beckie McNair from the Fairfax County Department of Human Resources, Employee Relations Division, assisted us in the interviews. I should state again that these interviews and the survey were not and were never intended to be scientific processes. The following conclusions and recommendations are based on our non-scientific observations and involve our best judgement.

(A) Many employees had a limited knowledge and understanding of the evaluation process.

When asked to describe the process, most described it merely as an annual event. Most of the employees making the allegations and many of the sixteen employees interviewed were not clear on exactly what they could do if they disagreed with their evaluation or believed that their supervisor was treating them unfairly in the process. They also expressed the belief that they had no where to appeal for a fair and objective review when they receive an unfair or unjust evaluation. They repeatedly expressed the belief that they would not receive a fair review from ADS management. They also believe the Department of Human Resources functions primarily as an advocate for ADS management to help management make sure they have met all the requirements when issuing a negative evaluation or personnel actions. They expressed the opinion that any kind of appeal just makes matters worse in their job environment with their supervisor. In deed, it appears to us that by the time a dispute gets to the formal grievance process it has become a no win situation for both parties.

Recommendations

Publicize to all agency staff the entire employee evaluation process, from discussing the standards of performance to knowing how to address dissatisfaction with the final rating.

Agency Response

The CSB will send a memo in January 1999 to all agency staff describing the entire evaluation process. DHR will be asked to review the memo prior to distribution.

Recommendation

Train all new supervisors and any current supervisors who have not been through the Department of Human Resource's course designed to assist supervisors in improving employee performance. One of the ADS section heads indicated that when he tried to schedule his supervisors for the training it was usually full and he couldn't get his people enrolled. Human Resources has agreed to work with ADS to accommodate any ADS demand for the training.

Agency Response

Training from DHR for CSB supervisors to assist with ways to improve employee performances is scheduled for February 1999.

Recommendation

We recommend that ADS educate and encourage supervisors and employees to use the new Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process. The County is testing a new Alternative Dispute Resolution Process. This process is designed to create a win/win resolution of conflict through voluntary mediation. Well-trained mediators from outside the agency are chosen by the parties to come in and facilitate discussing the issues in an open, honest and confidential forum with the goal of arriving at a mutually satisfactory agreement. This gives employees someone to turn to outside of the agency or the Department of Human Resources and at the same time assist management to achieve a satisfactory resolution without resorting to the win/lose grievance process.

Agency Response

A memo was sent to all CSB staff encouraging participation in the new Alternative Dispute Resolution program.

(B) For the period 1996, 1997, and 1998 (through 10/9/98) there were 123 late merit increments. We asked the Department of Human Resources for a list of late employee evaluations for the three-year period 1996 through 1998 year to date. PRISM does not keep track of evaluations that are completed late. There is a correlation between late merit increments and late evaluations. However, an employee's merit increment can be late for a number of reasons. There is nothing in PRISM that indicates why the merits were late. We did not ask this question in the interviews however, four of the employees indicated that their evaluations were late on occasion. ADS policy requires supervisors to complete evaluations a month before they are due. The Human Services Administration maintains a tickler file and notifies the supervisor three months before the due date of the evaluation.

Recommendation

ADS management needs to continue to monitor past due merits and follow-up with the appropriate supervisor and manager.

Agency Response

The tracking process will be reviewed by Barbara Levering, Personnel Manager. Modifications, if needed, will be made to the process. Program Managers shall be responsible for follow-up with supervisors and managers.

(C) It appears that currently, supervisors are doing a reasonable job of informing employees of job expectations for their positions. Section 12.3 of the Personnel Regulation requires every agency to maintain a current position description and performance standards for all positions and it is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that subordinate personnel know what is expected of them.

With only a couple of exceptions, all of the employees interviewed reported that they understood what was expected of them in their job performance in advance of their evaluations. They all reported that they knew this primarily through verbal feedback from their supervisors. Most of these same employees indicated that they had been given performance standards when they first started work,

which in many cases was years ago. All seemed to regard the regular weekly one on one supervision sessions as the best source of information concerning job performance.

Recommendation

After identifying a core of essential standards of performance, allow a supervisor and employee to jointly create other informal job expectations, within the context of approved job standards, that are specific to the job and relevant to the mission of the agency.

Agency Response

All CSB supervisors will be informed that they are permitted to jointly create with their staff, informal job expectations. However, County performance standards shall remain the measure of employee evaluation.

(D) The primary source of interim feedback of job performance is the weekly clinical supervision sessions. Each employee should receive continuous ongoing feedback about their performance from their supervisor. Actual evaluations should relate to existing performance standards and known job expectations. Employees should never be surprised by their evaluations. Thirteen of the sixteen employees interviewed reported weekly clinical supervision meetings with their supervisors in which they often received feedback of their job performance. About half of the employees interviewed were somewhat surprised at some elements in their performance evaluations, suggesting they were not aware of the criteria that had been used to evaluate them. Most of the employees making the various allegations about the process indicated they were surprised by their annual evaluations.

Recommendation

Provide feedback during the evaluation cycle- both positive and negative, written and oral. The weekly clinical supervision meetings present an excellent opportunity for supervisor and employee to discuss any job performance issues. In addition to clinical issues, we recommend supervisors, as a matter of policy and practice, use these sessions to provide both positive and negative feedback about job performance to employees. This is especially important if there are any negative performance issues. Brief notes should be kept as data for use during annual formal evaluations.

Agency Response

The CSB shall request a special training from DHR to enhance supervisory techniques, particularly with regard to positive and negative feedback. The training will occur for CSB supervisors over a 3-month period.

Recommendation

Consider a non-binding, midyear rating, when there is a performance issue, to let the employee know how the process is going and what the rating would be if given then.

Agency Response

The CSB shall comply with this recommendation. A memo of reminder was distributed to all staff on December 6, 1998. More frequent ratings continue to be a valuable option for managers when employees have performance issues.

(E) Most employees considered the Personnel Performance Evaluation Process helpful but a significant minority did not. The aim of Personnel Performance Evaluation Process is to motivate each employee to perform at the highest possible level and to assist each employee in performance improvement. Evaluations should be conducted with an attitude of coaching or counseling the employee.

With this in mind, we asked the current ADS employees that we interviewed if the employee evaluation process was helpful to them? Ten of the sixteen employees said yes, it was helpful to them. Three said no and described it as a "fear" process while two said it was a "formality" or more accurately described as "informative". One employee declined to answer questions due to fear of retaliation.

In our survey of former ADS employees, we asked if the performance evaluation process is used to motivate and assist employees? Of the 37 respondents, half (50%) indicated that the process was usually or always used to motivate and assist employees. The remaining 50% said it was helpful only sometimes or never.

Here are some suggestions that came out of the interview and survey process that we think could make the process more helpful to both supervisors and employees:

Recommendation

The Department of Human Resources should conduct completely anonymous exit interviews when ADS employees leave. They should do written surveys of 100% of persons that leave with selected interviews of others.

Agency Response

The DHR has requested supplemental funding in the FY 2000 budget to establish a formal exit interview program by outsourcing to a neutral third party.

Recommendation

Invite the periodic review by each employee of their work site file and the central personnel file.

Agency Response

A memo will be distributed to all CSB staff describing information maintained in the work site file and the official personnel file at the DHR. Staff will be invited to review their file.

Recommendation

Ensure that each employee is informed about the data that is included in the evaluation rating. If there is no data, but only personal recollections by the supervisor, the process takes on a very subjective flavor.

Agency Response

The CSB will send a memo to all agency staff describing the entire evaluation process. The DHR will be asked to review the memo prior to distribution.

Recommendation

Provide more frequent positive feedback when it is deserved. Some employees expressed how much they appreciate frequent positive feedback from their supervisors.

Agency Response

The CSB shall request a special training from the DHR in January to enhance supervisory techniques, particularly with regard to positive and negative feedback. The training will occur for CSB supervisors starting in February 1999.

Recommendation

Invite employee participation in gathering information about performance. One person mentioned "brag sheets" that are used in the military in which the employee lists all of their good things they did throughout the year and gives it to the supervisor before the evaluation is prepared. This is a good way for employees to feel that they have some input into the process and for managers to find out about talent and productivity.

Agency Response

In the training provided by DHR to CSG supervisory staff, guidelines will be developed for employee participation. The CSB will request a training from DHR for supervisors to assist with ways to improve employee performance.

Recommendation

Once a year, encourage an informal process where employees are invited to submit anonymous evaluations of their supervisors with any recommendations for changes to the way things are done. The supervisor may receive some good recommendations to implement and can explain reasons for not implementing others.

Agency Response

Currently, the County Executive has established task forces to redesign a number of County processes. One of these task forces is addressing the issue of employee evaluation of supervisory performance. The CSB defers any specific action until the County task force's recommendations are approved.

Recommendation

There should be a strong consideration of how supervisors and employees interact as a function, of how counselors and clients interact. Some employees thought that part of the current problem in ADS might be a carryover of the confrontational style of the client counselor relationship to the employment relationship.

Agency Response

The CSB will request a training from DHR for supervisors to assist with ways to improve employee performances.

Recommendation

There needs to be more of a support structure for employee burnout. This appears to be a stressful profession over time. We noticed that the newer employees were more positive, enthusiastic, and energetic, while employees that had been there for many years tended to be more negative.

Agency Response

The CSB will request training in January from DHR for supervisors to assist with ways to improve employee performances and reduce problems of burnout. In addition, the CSB will review recommendations from the workplace assessment, which is being conducted by Applied Technology Systems, Inc.¹

Recommendation

The whole agency needs to meet more frequently and hear that they are doing a great job for their clients, the client families, and the whole of Fairfax County. Undoubtedly, they are helping law enforcement, the school system, and other agencies! People need to have a moment of validation and celebration.

Agency Response

The CSB currently has some staff recognition activities. A review of these activities is planned. Future action will be drawn from results of that review and from recommendations submitted through the workplace assessment study.¹

Recommendation

There should be some sort of ongoing quality control in place for the ADS employee evaluation process and hiring process.

Agency Response

The CSB follows and is in compliance with County policy and procedures. Concerns raised by staff will be reviewed on an ongoing basis through quality assurance efforts. In addition, further action will be planned if recommendations related to this issue are submitted through the workplace assessment study.¹

Employee Conduct and Disciplinary Actions

As part of our review of personnel administration in ADS, we reviewed the process followed for Employee Conduct and Disciplinary Actions. Employees alleged that management used conduct and disciplinary actions to retaliate and punish employees. The purpose of this part of the review was to determine if the process followed for conduct and disciplinary actions in ADS:

- complies with the Fairfax County Personnel Regulations, and
- determine if supervisors treat and discipline employees in a fair and equitable manner.

¹ In November 1998 the CSB contracted with Applied Technology Systems, Inc. (ATSI) to conduct a workplace assessment within all programs areas of the CSB. This work assessment study will provide a vehicle for staff for discuss a wide variety of workplace issues including management practices, perceived discrimination, parity pay issues, and the work culture in general. Planned interventions to address employee issues will be developed by ATSI and forwarded to CSB management by June 30, 1998 for implementation.

From 1996 through 1998 there were 16 disciplinary actions, 13 grievances, and 7 formal complaints filed with the Office of Equity Programs (OEP). We did not review the grievances or the OEP complaints because they are handled by an independent third party. A representative from the Department of Human Resources, Employee Relations Division and staff from the Internal Audit Office reviewed all of the 16 disciplinary actions.

1. The Conduct and Disciplinary Actions complied with the Fairfax County Personnel Regulations and in all cases it appeared that employees were treated in a fair and equitable manner.

Specifically, we determined the following:

(A) We determined that all of the Written Reprimand letters contained all of the following required elements:

- statement of charges
- statement that this is an official letter of reprimand
- statement of any previous offenses, if this is considered a continuation
- statement that similar occurrences result in more severe action

(B) All of the Suspensions, Dismissals, and Demotions met the following requirements:

- Promptly investigated & documented as to time, place, events, circumstances
- Reviewed & approved by higher level supervisor and Human Resources Director
- Advance Notice Letter prepared & delivered which contained
- Statement of charges
- Type of disciplinary action
- Statement that will be part of permanent personnel record
- Statement of previous offense if part of decision
- Effective date of action (no sooner than 10 business days from date of letter)
- Statement of employees right to grieve

(C) In all cases it appeared to the best of our judgement that:

- Employees had opportunity to reply and the reply was taken into consideration
- Severity of disciplinary action appears to reasonably match severity of misconduct.

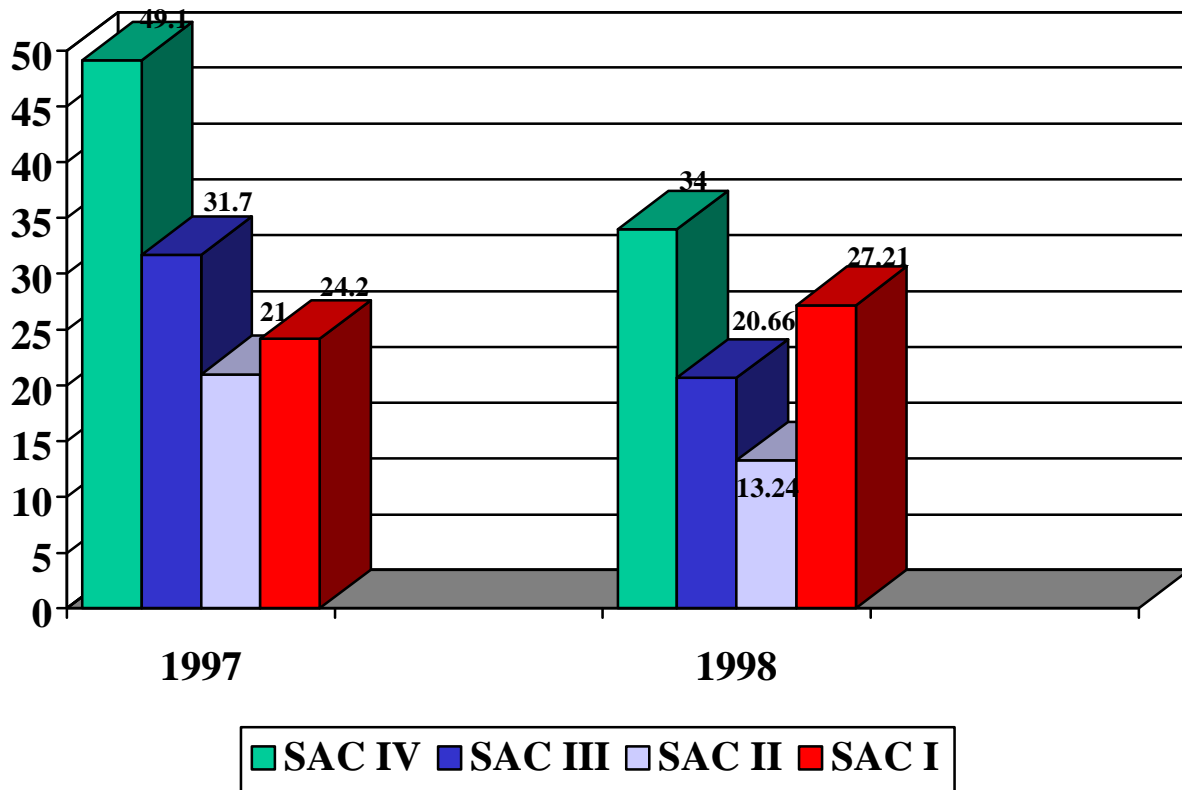
Administration of Overtime and Compensatory Time

In this section, the term “overtime” refers to both paid and compensatory time. Several current and former employees stated that supervisors report overtime but other employees are not allowed to report overtime even when they must work overtime. One of these employees also alleged that their supervisor was falsifying their time sheet. The employee suggested that we compare the sign-in/sign-out log to the supervisor’s time sheet.

1. ADS supervisory levels reported more overtime than lower level positions. The average overtime hours for all levels from SAC I through SAC IV appears reasonable. We would also expect that supervisors would work longer hours, on average, than lower level staff employees.

We analyzed reported overtime by position for the entire ADS agency for calendar years 1997 and 1998 year to date. We calculated the average overtime worked by level of SAC positions. The charts below show the averages by SAC position level:

Alcohol and Drug Services Agency Average Overtime/Compensatory Hours by Position



There did appear to be a disproportionate reporting of overtime among employees within the same position class. In six of the ADS sections we noted that one or two employees within the same grade level accounted for a disproportionate share of all overtime reported for that grade.

2. Substance Abuse Counselors are generally expected, as a management prerogative, to complete client documentation requirements within regularly scheduled work hours without compensation for additional time worked if needed.

One supervisor explained that paper work, client notes, and reporting requirements are not a valid reason to request overtime. She stated that if the SAC maintains good time management skills, overtime is not necessary. Some employees complained that they took paper work home to finish because they could not charge overtime to finish it. Paper work is important since it is often used in court and various reports to the state.

In accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, supervisors cannot knowingly permit an employee to work outside of the assigned hours, accept the benefit of the extra work, and then refuse to compensate the employee for the hours on the basis that he or she was not authorized to work those hours. The Fair Labor Standards Act refers to this concept as “suffering or permitting to work” and requires that the employee be compensated. If the supervisor knows that the employee is working extra hours then they must allow the employee to be compensated.

Even though Alcohol and Drug Services maintains the expectation that Substance Abuse Counselors exercise time management skills to complete client documentation within regularly scheduled work hours, the Fair Labor Standards Act must be observed by managers and supervisors to avoid the potential legal difficulties of uncompensated overtime.

Recommendation

If employees are required to work extra hours to complete paper work, then they must be allowed to report the hours as overtime on their time sheets. If working extra hours to complete the paper work is a problem, then it should be handled as either a workload issue or an employee performance issue.

Agency Response

The CSB agrees with recommendation. Program Managers will send a memo to their supervisory staff explaining the issue and directing staff to approve hours of overtime worked to complete paperwork.

3. We found no evidence that the supervisor in question had incorrectly reported their time.

We compared the sign-in/sign-out log to time sheets for selected pay periods in 1998. We found seven different days where the log and the time sheets did not agree. When we reviewed these differences with the supervisor they could not recall where they were on each specific day since most were several months old. There can be legitimate reasons why these differences exist. This supervisor is responsible for supervising three separate locations and is often required to be out of the office at one of those locations. They also are required to attend management meetings out of

the office from time to time. It was not possible to determine from the physical records whether the reported time was correct or incorrect. It was also not possible to determine where the supervisor may have been on a particular day several months ago.

Recommendation

If any employee was working out of the office on a previous day, they should make a notation to that effect in the log when they first return to the office the next day. This will eliminate any future allegations of this type and eliminate the problem of remembering where the person may have been for several hours on a particular day, months earlier.

Agency Response

The CSB agrees. Program Managers will send a memo to supervisors to direct staff to make a notation of destination and time in sign in/out logs, in those programs using such logs, when staff are out of the office.

Conflict of Interest Issues

Some former employees alleged two conflict of interest issues in ADS. They are:

- **Referrals to Local Alcohol/Drug Providers.** It was alleged that ADS staff are referring clients to outside local alcohol/drug treatment providers based on outside employment by those providers.
- **Preferential Treatment.** It was also alleged that a relative of a current County employee got preferential treatment in the ADS drug program. Specifically, it was alleged that the person moved ahead on the waiting list and was not required to pay for the service.

Referrals to Local Alcohol/Drug Providers.

1. We could not determine if referrals are made only to firms employing ADS staff because no supporting documentation or record of referrals is maintained. Outside employment of SACs by these local treatment providers in Fairfax County provides the opportunity and appearance of conflict of interest.

Alcohol and Drug and Mental Health Services maintains a referral list of licensed private practitioners. To be on the list, the practitioner must submit an application to FFCCSB. The list is distributed to the three sites of Entry and Referral Services at Mt. Vernon, Woodburn, and Northwest Center.

There is no follow-up to referrals given out and no formal record of referrals. CSB recognized this as an area with potential conflict of interest problems. An internal CSB policy #3020 was developed in 1998 to specifically address it. Among other things, the policy states:

"Persons who call any CSB directly operated program to inquire about receiving services in the private sector will be given the names of three private providers who have been screened by Alcohol and Drug Services, Mental Health Services, or Mental Retardation Services. Private providers

who wish to be on the CSB referral list must complete an application."

"Staff of CSB directly operated and contract programs may not make referrals to individual Board members, CSB staff or group practices where the referring staff member has a pecuniary interest."

Staff are required to provide three referrals from the authorized Private Referral List. Any qualified private practice can be placed on the list by completing and submitting an Application for Private Referral List. Currently, eight ADS employees are authorized to work for outside private providers, some of which are on the Private Referral List.

Recommendation

We agree with the proposed revisions to CSB Policy 3020, Outside Employment and Conflict of Interest. With close monitoring by CSB, the proposed changes, which include the following, should minimize the risk of conflict of interest:

- "Outside employment is conditional and must be approved by the person's supervisor and program manager."
- "... any group practices of which a member is an employee of the CSB or of any CSB directly operated program may not be included in any telephone referral list."
- "... staff of CSB directly operated and contract program may not accept a referral into their practice of a person who is a current client of the CSB."

Agency Response

The CSB provides services to a wide range of clients with various combinations of problems and challenges. In order to recruit quality personnel, the CSB has allowed staff to maintain private practices. Following both County policy and CSB policy and regulations, safeguards are in place to avoid conflicts of interest. The CSB is currently undergoing a review of its Policy #3020 and Regulation #2020 regarding outside employment. With the assistance of DHR, modifications to this policy and regulation will strengthen practices in the CSB to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

The CSB conducted a review of its private provider referral list in November 1998. Two CSB employees were found to be on the list and were immediately deleted. In addition, the CSB is sending a letter to all private practice groups, currently on the Private Provider Referral List, requesting that names of all members of the practice be given to the CSB and to submit future changes in membership. A review of the membership of private practice groups will enable the CSB to monitor restrictions for CSB staff and for Private Practice Groups who receive referrals from the CSB.

If the CSB restricted the practice of allowing outside employment, recruitment and retention issues would escalate in our programs. The CSB would become a training ground for the private sector and

clients with limited or no ability to pay could risk reduced quality of services. Since the County is not near the high end of the market scale of therapist or psychiatrist salaries, this outside employment enables CSB staff to achieve a fair income.

Preferential Treatment

2. We reviewed the case of the County employee family member who was alleged to have received preferential treatment and found the allegations to be unfounded.

It was alleged a County employee's family member was placed ahead of others on a waiting list and that the family was not paying the normal fee charged to other clients.

The person in question was not placed ahead of anyone on a waiting list. We also reviewed records indicating that the fee had been calculated, billed, and paid by the individual.

Agency Morale

1. In our judgement, ADS has a growing morale problem with a significant minority of its employees.

Throughout this review our office has continuously received letters, phone calls, and interviews with current and former ADS employees communicating various levels of dissatisfaction with ADS. Measuring morale is a subjective process at best but there are certain indicators than can be measured. In order to assess the extent of morale problems in ADS, we took the following steps:

- We calculated employee turnover in ADS and compared it to turnover for the entire County for 1996, 1997, and 1998.
- We calculated average sick leave usage per ADS employees and compared it to the entire County for 1996, 1997, and 1998.
- We surveyed former ADS employees that had left since 1996 and asked them, among other things, why they left and we asked several questions about job satisfaction.

The following are the results:

(A) Employee turnover seems to be in line with the turnover for the entire County. Table I below shows the turnover statistics. The only caveat may be the rate of pay and the job market. According to the Department of Human Resources and several employees, Fairfax County Government pays better than the private sector and better than any other surrounding jurisdictions. This could keep turnover down in the agency.

Table I

**Fairfax/Falls Church Community Services Board
Alcohol & Drug Services Division
Summary of Employee Separations**

	1996		1997		1998	
	ADS	County	ADS	County	ADS	County
ALL CATEGORIES						
Total employee separations	31	2514	37	2,975	31	1,933
Total employees per payroll	276	14,084	289	13,721	303	14,417
% of employee separations	11.2%	17.9%	12.8%	21.7%	10.2%	13.4%
REGULAR MERIT EMPLOYEES						
Total employee separations	19	804	23	802	15	668
Total employees per payroll	223	10,265	233	10,307	237	10,365
% of employee separations	8.5%	7.8%	9.9%	7.8%	6.3%	6.4%
Total per PRISM Position Turnover Report	10.3%	9.1%	12.5%	9.0%	8.5%	7.1

(B) Average sick leave usage appears to be inline with the rest of the County. Table II below reflects the average sick leave usage per employee for ADS and the rest of the County.

Table II

**Average Sick Leave Hours Used
Per Employee**

	Calendar 1996	Calendar 1997	Calendar 1998
Alcohol & Drug Abuse	76.1	73.1	50.7
Countywide Average	71.6	67.8	47.6

(C) The survey of former employees provides some indications of morale problems in ADS.

Tables III, IV, V, and VI show some survey results dealing with job satisfaction. Two things need be considered when looking at the results. One, this was not a scientific survey, and two, some respondents appear to be employees who had disciplinary actions while employed at ADS. With those qualifications in mind the following appear significant:

- People left ADS for a wide variety of reasons. There was no clear-cut majority reason. Reasons ranged from dismissal to retirement.
- 27% of respondents were dissatisfied with the employment selection process.

- Although only 4% left because of the rate of pay, only 23% were satisfied with advancement and transfer opportunities.
- Only 52% of respondents were satisfied with communications with supervisors compared to 83% satisfied with communications with co-workers.
- Only 57% of respondents expressed overall job satisfaction at ADS.
- Only 36% were satisfied with morale among employees.

Table III
Reasons for Leaving ADS

Reason	Percentage
Retirement	2%
Dismissal	2%
Forced Resignation	7%
Better Job Opportunity	16%
Family/Personal Circumstances	13%
Return to School	2%
Type of Work	6%
Self Employment	3%
Rate of Pay	4%
Health	3%
Supervision	16%
Commute Distance	4%
Other	22%

Table IV
Employment at ADS

Condition	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Fairness of selection process	8%	19%	8%	31%	33%
Extent to which job made good use of my skills, abilities	11%	14%	9%	46%	20%
Advancement, transfer opportunities	22%	19%	36%	17%	6%
Work Conditions	17%	14%	14%	31%	25%
Communication with supervisors	23%	11%	14%	26%	26%
Communication with co-workers	0%	0%	17%	54%	29%
Outside training opportunities	17%	14%	14%	22%	33%
On the job training	14%	17%	17%	25%	28%
Hours of work	3%	14%	19%	42%	22%
Resolution of my concerns and problems	17%	17%	25%	25%	17%
Morale among employees	17%	19%	28%	22%	14%
My overall job satisfaction at ADS	19%	11%	14%	33%	22%
Level of agency success in mission	18%	9%	21%	32%	21%

Table V
Employee Performance Evaluations

Reason	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
For each position there is a clear description of duties to be performed.	6%	30%	36%	27%
For each position there are readily understandable and consistent performance standards.	9%	29%	41%	21%
Each employee is fully informed as to what is expected of him or her on the job.	6%	38%	38%	18%
Employees are coached/counseled on a continuing basis on their performance with feedback on any needed improvements.	6%	49%	29%	17%
Employees receive written feedback that is precise and timely.	17%	34%	31%	17%
Employees receive a formal evaluation at least annually	0%	13%	9%	78%
Employees are surprised by negative or poor evaluations by supervisors in the formal evaluation.	18%	65%	18%	0%
Performance Evaluation process is used to motivate and assist employees.	18%	32%	35%	15%
Performance Evaluation process is used to “punish” or “get rid” of employees.	50%	31%	6%	13%

Table VI
Disciplinary Actions

Reason	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Employees are aware of rules of conduct, code of ethics, other ground rules and special requirements.	8%	29%	33%	29%
Policies and rules are consistently enforced.	22%	35%	26%	17%
Alleged employee offenses/misconduct are promptly and thoroughly investigated.	30%	26%	22%	22%
Employees are given ample opportunity to respond and provide their side of the story.	22%	26%	26%	26%
Severity of discipline is consistent and matches severity of misconduct or offense.	37%	21%	21%	21%
There is a sense that discipline is progressive in nature.	32%	18%	18%	32%
Disciplinary actions are taken only for good cause and for the sole purpose of correcting problem situations	19%	29%	24%	29%